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ABSTRACT

Theories of social interaction and lifelong learning have been advanced by K. Lewin, J. Moreno, T. Sarbin, J. W. Thibaut and H. H. Kelley, R. S. Perinbanayagam, and B. Dervin. From this research lifelong learning can be seen as an affective and cognitive activity that occurs in the life-space of the actor in response to positive or negative field forces at any given moment in time or across periods of time. The actor may respond positively or negatively to field forces in a manner that ranges from being deliberately focused, or inquisitive, to one that is ill-defined, or haphazard. The actor responds to life situations by assuming a select few roles in any given situation. In the learning process the actor migrates, at times into psychically and socially unfamiliar regions that are beyond the boundaries of his or her life-space. In the learning process the actor is attempting, through a series of responses, to make sense out of what challenges, intrigues, or intrudes into his or her life. That sense-making process may seem to appear predictable or unpredictable, but it is a journey unique to each and every actor. This report contains a section of vignettes reporting the lifelong learning experiences of a variety of persons gathered during interviews conducted with 191 adults with varied levels of education and socioeconomic status. Contains 47 references. (KC)

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THE ADULT LEARNER:

A SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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THE ADULT LEARNER: A SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The following documents a search for sociopsychological elements in information seeking that might allow the reader to gain a broader perspective of the adult as a lifelong learner. Findings are based on interviews with 191 adults in three studies (Shirk, 1984, 1985, 1994), and a sifting of these data through the influence of such social scientists as Anderson and Carter, Argyle, Dervin, Lewin, Moreno, Perinbanayagam, Sarbin, and Thibaut and Kelley. Shared responses divulged by the actors in the three studies disclosed influences on their life-space that in their sense of time evolved into learning episodes--they will hopefully provide the library public with a view of what occurs in its communities of users and non-users, and in the lives of librarians as well. If the author succeeds, the reader will have a clearer understanding of the vibrant nature of adults' everyday acquisition and assimilation of new information and practices into their lives.

Whatever follows should be accepted as having flowed through various filters that have potentially, or actually, created layers of bias. Responses to interview probes were percolated through memory-sparking moments in which lapses or exaggerations may have occurred about events of chance, choice, coercion, compulsion, or curiosity. The "stranger value" (Argyle, 1969), however, may have reduced bias by enabling participants to willingly share privileged information with an unknown other.

It is not limited to academically recognized accomplishments, deliberately devised activities, and intricate cognitive activity.

More often, lifelong learning is about the uncertainty of daily stuff, the drama of living that influences the affective and cognitive domains of personal development. It is about the process of altering one's life-space by gathering and assimilating information. The process may be deliberate, haphazard, or serendipitous, and may have had its roots in developing relationships, establishing and meeting challenges, finding ways to become detached from life's more serious side, making risk shifts, attempting to make sense out of the nonsense of life, bridging gaps of uncertainty or information blockages, or simply trying to survive. In its survival mode the process may unwittingly or deliberately involve secretiveness, deception, and self-deception (Chatman, 1996). It is also about the economic and sociopsychological costs and benefits accrued by the actors while incorporating change into their lives.

What constituted lifelong learning from the perspective of participants in the three studies? It was not uncommon for actors to convey uncertainty when asked: "Did you learn anything new in the past year?" Routine responses included "No. It sounds crazy but I really can't think of a thing;" "Not that I know of;" or "It has been a dull year. I didn't learn anything new." But discriminatory interchanges between the researcher and actors frequently disconfirmed those responses and led to the discovery of serendipitous activities, or recall of significant episodes that, due to their complexity, seeming superficiality, psychological

repression, or forgetfulness had, until that time, led to intentional, or unintentional, lapses in memory.

In order for the reader to follow the presentation I will preface my findings with a brief explanation of the theories that have influenced the interpretation of the data. Future articles will incorporate vignettes that give the reader a window into respondents' lives; the economic costs and benefits of their activities with a focus on consumer behavior; the nature of community learning networks; and the roles public librarians act out in their day-to-day interaction with their publics.

Interpreting Lifelong Learning Through Select Social Psychologists

Social psychologists continue to advance in their understanding of human behavior in the context of interpersonal relationships. A common thread throughout these writings is a focus on the actor's stance in a variety of life-shaping situations and circumstances that fosters a holistic view of lifelong learning--a view that seems too frequently to get lost in more formal interpretations of the topic..

Field Theory

Kurt Lewin was considered one of the architects of social psychology. In their introduction to Advances in Field Theory (1990), editors Wheelan, Pepitone, and Aby cite Henle (1977): "we are in the process of advancing to where Lewin was 60 years ago." His legacy continues.

Lewin defined his concept of field theory in the context of environments and relationships. A basic principle is that actors exist in environments (fields) in which any behavior or changes in psychological fields are dependent not only upon interacting forces at a moment in time, it consists of the totality of coexisting facts in a person's life which are conceived as mutually interdependent (Lewin in Cartwright, 1951). Constructs in his understanding of field influences on the actors' life-space includes, field forces, marginal space, regions of freedom, social locomotion, tension systems, time perspective, and valences.

1. Field forces include the impact of all positive or negative forces that have direction, strength, and point of application in the lives of actors.

2. Life-space consists of all the conscious or unconscious facts, events, feelings, and perceptions influencing actors at any given moment in time.

3. The idea of marginal space is used to identify the location of the person who is standing on the boundary of, and experiencing the attraction, of two groups yet belonging to neither.

4. Social locomotion describes any physical or psychological move from one region to another resulting in a change of environment that influences nearly every aspect of an actor's life-space.

5. The term tension system is used to identify an actor's internal and external states of being during periods of change, or

flux, including the direction of equalization from both neighboring systems and those within the individual.

6. Time perspective refers to the effect that distance from future and past events can have on an individual's expanding or contracting life-space.

7. Region of freedom refers to "The determination of the psychological place at which a (person) is and his (her) region of freedom of movement, that is, of the regions that are accessible to him and of those regions that psychologically exist...but are inaccessible by reason of the social situation or because of the limitations of his own social, physical, and intellectual abilities" (Lewin, 1935).

8. Valences are the critical properties of an individual's life space, positive, or negative, that determine what direction behavior would take.

The Lewinian idea of "boundary" ties these concepts together. The boundary of one's life-space could be hard (limiting, difficult to penetrate or expand), or soft (open to exploration, innovation, new relationships, and new ways of thinking). Through his creative research, Lewin attempted to map out the life-space and boundaries of individuals. Gold in Wheelan, Pepitone, and Abt (1990) noted: "The effectiveness of social practice in altering people's experience and behavior is measured by the degree to which practice permeates the boundary in intended ways. Theory useful for practice will be theory that explains the processes of crossing the boundary."

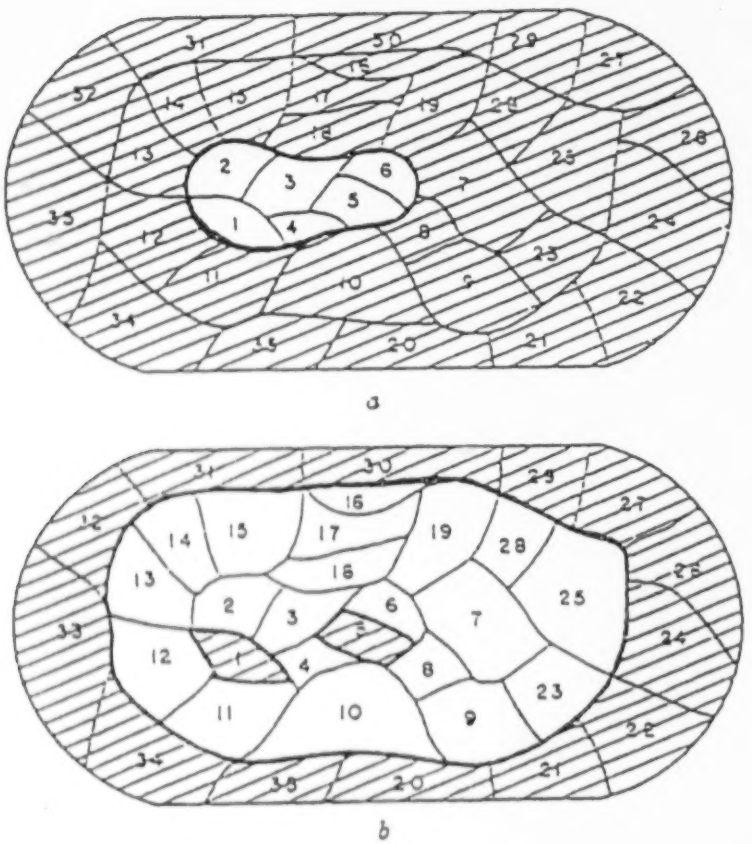
Lewin's mapping of one's "space of free movement" and accompanying comments provide insight into his field theory; it is a window into the components that are responsible for the expansion, or contraction, of the boundaries throughout one's immediate, or extended timeline (see Figure 1). With a little imagination, the reader can envision migration and boundary expansion patterns resulting from an actor's involvement in the dynamics of lifelong learning.

Lewin's concepts of field theory and boundary modification could be used to trace and visualize these ongoing positive, or negative, and temporary, or permanent, processes. For example, mapping, done over a period of time, could provide insight into family relationships. Argyle (1969) noted it was not uncommon for individual members and families, as units, to experience states of some degree of "equilibrium". A wide range of crises could however, create periods of dislocation, followed by a return to the previous, or new state of stability.

Drama and Dramaturgy

A number of social psychologists have viewed human existence as drama and individual participants as actors. Performing on life's stage and each player's life-space is characterized by a degree of uncertainsty--during that period the actor assumes one, one, or several, of many different response roles in a given setting. At any moment, an individual's physical, mental, and

Figure 1



Comparison of the **space of free movement** of the child and adult. The activity regions are represented. The accessible regions are blank; the inaccessible shaded. (a) The space of free movement of the **child** includes the regions 1-6, representing activities such as getting into the movies at children's rates...etc. The regions 7-35 are not accessible, representing activities such as driving a car...etc. (b) The **adult** space of free movement is considerably wider, although it too is bounded by regions of activities inaccessible...such as...entering beyond his social or intellectual capacity (represented by regions including 29-35). Some of the regions accessible to the child are not accessible to **the adult**, for instance, getting into the movies at childrens rates, or doing things socially taboo for an adult which are permitted to the child (represented by regions 1 and 5) (Cartwright, 1951).

spiritual environment can be influenced by internal and external, positive and negative field forces that could result in its expansion, contraction or stagnation. The altering of one's surrounding conditions and circumstances can be a voluntary and deliberate act or the result of an accident, or chance happening.

Moreno, the originator of the concept of drama and dramaturgy in the interpretation of life's everyday episodes, published his findings in Who Shall Survive: Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama (1953). He constructrd his sociograms to portray the interplay of relationships and personal choices in group settings.

Sarbin in Allen and Scheibe (1982) proposed the "dramaturgical model" in order to show the contextualization of social interaction. Referencing Turner (1974), Sarbin lists five principal elements of the model: 'meaningful' social interaction; self and the recognition of separate individuality is constructed in social interaction; from the dramaturgical perspective, participants in social interaction are viewed as actors who "not only respond to situations but also mold and create them"; participants are not viewed in isolation, they are interacting persons; and "As episodes begin and end, human beings continually construct and reconstruct meanings to make sense of their observations of the performance of others and of self".

Building on the dramaturgical model, Sarbin then focused attention on the many roles that actors could assume across their lifetime.

> Once an interactant accurately locates the position of other interactants on the basis of behavioral symbolic, or artifactual cues the range of possible role behaviors is reduced from near infinity to a small number. For example, to a person entering a school building, the number of possible positions he will consider for any person he encounters is reduced from the thousands of positions known to him to four or five. The positions of any persons encountered will be student, teacher, principal, secretary, or custodian. The locations will be compounded by age and sex characteristics, such as young female teacher, male student, and old male principal....(Allen and Scheibe, 1982).

Evidences of role contextualization repeatedly surfaced as this author sorted his data and learning sociograms in light of the works of Sarbin and others. Respondents could be seen acting out a wide variety of roles as they reported about their learning activities, taking on, at times, a literal sense of drama. It was not uncommon for the actors to display a sense of accomplishment with the evidences of their newly acquired skills and abilities.

Learning sociograms (Shirk, 1984), based on the author's attempts to disclose both the obvious and subtle sociopsychological climates influencing the actors at the time of interviews. These observations revealed the resources the actors utilized to support their activities. The climates included physical well-being, domestic lifestyle, economic status, psychological attitudes, family relationships, community standing and prestige, etc. Negative internal values could offset what seemed to be external wholesomeness and prosperity. Conversely, positive internal values could counterbalance and offset external adversity and misfortune.

Actors frequently shared their experiences, recalling real-life occurrences resulting in real-life consequences that had been

interpreted as the internalization of real-life guidance and instruction. Again and again the researcher was made aware that evidences of spirit and spiritual dramas were unfolding before him.

Group Dynamics and the Costs and Benefits of Building Relationships

In their work, The Social Psychology of Groups, Thibaut and Kelley (1967, 1986) expounded on the costs and rewards of developing meaningful relationships (dyads) between two or more actors. Influenced by Lewin, Moreno and others, they coined the terms "comparison level" (C-L) and "comparison level alternative" (C-L alt). A high C-L for an actor engaging in a relationship indicated that rewards for participating with another outweighed costs; a low C-L indicated costs outweighed rewards, and that the relationship might be in jeopardy. If an existing relationship (C-L alt) provided greater rewards than the one being formed, then the new affiliation was in danger of being terminated. Also,when compared with an existing partnership, a new one could replace it when rewards outweighed costs.

Thibaut and Kelley then identified eight elements that contribute to dyad development: choice and rewards, choice and costs, rejection, abilities, propinquity (kinship, nearness), similarity of attitude, complementary needs, and power, and status. Each element contributes to the development of some form of meaningful interaction. Choice and rewards could result from participation in networks that provide some form of economic,

social, or spiritual rewards to all involved. Not necessarily limited to those with similar convictions, even where differences between actors emerged, rewards could be generated.

Choice and costs could be the result of an actor's underestimating the costs in relationship building. In spite of social limitations on the part of one party, the other could be accepting, even if there was not a socially acceptable response.

Rejection could stem from the fact that "...every individual voluntarily enters and stays in any relationship only as long as it is adequately satisfactory in terms of his rewards and costs" (1986).

Abilities possessed by one of the partners are frequently not possessed by the other. This dissimilarity, however, could become the basis of developing relationships.

Propinquity (nearness or kinship) is likely to reduce social, psychological, and economic costs in creating and maintaining relationships.

Similarity in attitudes could result in meaningful relationships--similar, rather than conflicting, values between individuals are more likely to provide mutual rewards.

Complementary needs could lend themselves to situations in which both parties voluntarily participate in and mutually assess "the gratification potentialities in the relationships".

Power and status could be the result of friendships and relationships that engendered prestige, dignity, or upward mobility. In Lewinian terminology, social locomotion (Cartwright,

1951), could be an endeavor in which an actor associates or develops asrelationship with another person based on status/power.

Social Space and Social Acts

Perinbanayagam (1985) influenced the field of social psychology with his studies regarding the nature of communication in social situations. Influenced by George Herbert Meade and others, Perinbanayagam's search for meaning in social events led him to state that people generate social acts through participation with at least one other that result in the construction of stable meanings, relationships, and worlds which occur in situations. He defined "situation" as "an encompassing arrangement of space, objects, and persons designed to elicit determinate responses from actors and serves as the locus in which words are exchanged by participants in the social act, leading to further refinements and redefinitions, this time accomplished by manipulating the structures of the language being used." Exchanges in a situation by actors in a social space were considered relative in intensity and duration as dictated by time and space out of which acts were "produced and directed by the participants in order to aid each other in arriving at the relevant conceptualization of the situation so that each of them can proceed to the next step." He added "these social acts that occur in situations are usually, if not always, characterized by the presence of problematic events."

Of particular enlightenment to this author's research are Perinbanayagam's concepts taken from Meade about reflectivity--particularly the idea of "myself" as a resource for learning.

Perinbanayagam stated:

> Once the capacity for it (reflectivity) has emerged and been fully developed, then it is possible for an individual equipped with such reflectivity to, at times, dispense with a real, tactile, and semiotically sensitive other and become his own respondent and participate in the creation, autochthonously as it were, of discoursive acts. In other words, he can observe and make his own 'measurements' of his own acts; however, there is no guarantee that even then the other's observations will in any case be commensurate with his own. Yet, a self is capable of such a reflective measurement of his own productions. Mead wrote: 'After a self has arisen, it in a certain sense provides for itself its social experiences, as so we can conceive of an absolutely solitary self' (1934:140).

Actors in my studies: they frequently and often modestly, or hesitantly, identified themselves as resources (not necessarily the highest rated) to support their learning projects.

Sense-making

In Dervin's research in "sense-making" a set of concepts and methods are used to "study how people construct sense of their worlds, and, in particular, how they construct information needs and uses for information in the process of sense-making" (in Glazier and Powell, 1992). Set in the context of everyday existence, and in the assumption of discontinuity, it includes life's isolated peak experiences as well as its raw ambiguity. It assumes that one's life-space is "potentially discontinuous from time to time and space to space"; that whatever "order" exists for an actor is not directly accessible to an observer; and "it assumes

that humans do not have available to them an external standard to which they can turn for an assessment of their truth, either in an absolute or even a relative sense" (in Glazier and Powell, 1992) It is the internal and external behavior of individuals that allows them to construct and design their movements through space and time ("time-space") in which "all information is subjective." Not fully comprehensible nor constant, reality is relative to any individual at any given moment in time; it is situational. Incertitude and ambiguity are the norm--observations that apply to today may not be appropriate for tomorrow. Yet, as Dervin notes, sense-making assumes that there is something systematic about the way an actor approaches the gaps, whether it be repetitious construction based on past experiences, or newly created approaches based on new situations. Sense-making, therefore, is that constant process of bridging life's pervasive discontinuities and information gaps; the actor maneuvers to appropriate information that will satisfy perceived solutions to perceived predicaments.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning is an affective and cognitive activity. It is an activity that occurs in the life-space of the actor in response to positive, or negative, field forces at any given moment in time or across periods of time. The actor may respond positively or negatively to field forces in a manner that ranges from being deliberately focused, or inquisitive, to one that is ill-defined, or haphazard.

The respondent is identified as an actor who assumes a select few roles among many which he, or she, acts out in any given situation. In the learning process the actor migrates, at times, into physically and socially unfamiliar regions that are beyond the boundaries of his life- space. In the learning process the actor is attempting, through a series of responses, to make sense out of what challenges, intrigues, or intrudes into his or her life. That sense-making process may seem to appear predictable or unpredictable. It is a journey unique to each and every actor.

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THE ADULT LEARNER:

A SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

VIGNETTES

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"Self-acquaintance is a rare condition" (Henri).

Introduction

My second part of a three part series on lifelong learning is based on the theories of social psychologists reported in part I. Writings by Argyle, Dervin, Houle, Lewin, Moreno, Thibaut and Kelley, and others have challenged me to refine, and further analyze data gathered in my three field studies in lifelong learning. First, I will give a brief overview of data related to my holistic perspective of lifelong learning. Subsequently I will offer vignettes from select interviews--these provide a window into real-life situations of adults. They recounted events through which, from their perspecive, they attained a degree of learning or resolution. The sketches will highlight the boundary modification and dyad formation (developing relationships between people) that occurred, as reported.

Data Summarization

In order to provide a context for the vignettes that follow, a statistical summary from three studies (Shirk, 1984, 1985, 1992) is in order. Respondents were asked to identify environments in which learning transpired, i.e., formal or informal environments, with another person or alone, or "other" (see Table 1). Reported incidents resulting in an element of behavior modification most frequently occured in the presence of, or in conjunction with, another person, or in the solitude of adults' private life-space.

It less frequently occurred in formal surroundings. The average adult conducted 6.54 learning projects in a year, and utilized 3.37 resources per project (see table 2).

Table 1

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IDENTIFIED BY 191 ADULTS*

LOCATION	FORMAL	INFORMAL	WITH ANOTHER	ALONE	OTHER
Houston, TX	148	246	426	451	64
Port Townsend, WA	58	113	205	183	12
Livingston, MT	66	99	204	194	23
TOTAL	272	458	835	828	99

*Multiple selections were permitted for each learning project

Table 2

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROJECTS AND RESOURCES FOR EACH RESPONDENT

LOCATION	RESPONDENTS	PROJECTS	AVERAGE	RESOURCES	AVERAGE
Houston, TX	81	625	7.72	2222	3.56
Port Townsend, WA	50	320	6.40	1052	3.29
Livingston, MT	60	304	5.07	936	3.27
TOTAL	191	1249	6.54	4210	3.37

Participants were also asked to identify resources used in the projects (see Table 3). From these data it can be seen that actors identified their top five choices (not including "other") as themselves, their own books or magazines, friends, family, and public/academic library books.

Table 3

FREQUENCY OF RESOURCES USED IN THREE STUDIES BY 191 ADULTS

RESOURCES	HOUSTON				PORT TOWNSEND				LIVINGSTON				TOTAL			
	FREQUENCY	RANK	RATING	RANK	FREQUENCY	RANK	RATING	RANK	FREQUENCY	RANK	RATING	RANK	FREQUENCY	RANK	RATING	RANK
SELF	313	2	3.98	6	171	1	3.64	10	145	1	3.77	10	629	1	3.80	10
FAMILY	179	4	4.37	3	114	5	3.86	5	79	5	4.18	5	372	5	4.14	5
OWN BOOKS	319	1	3.83	10	117	3	3.62	11	97	3	4.02	7	533	2	3.82	9
BOOKS FROM FRIENDS	102	11	3.80	12	48	10	3.50	13	41	12	3.76	11	191	11	3.69	12
LIBRARY BOOKS	139	7	3.68	14	72	6	3.46	14	68	6	3.53	15	279	6	3.56	14
MEDIA	115	9	3.25	15	48	10	3.04	15	47	10	3.55	14	210	10	3.28	15
FRIENDS	259	3	3.94	9	133	2	3.83	7	94	4	3.95	9	486	3	3.91	7
INFORMAL GROUP	157	6	3.76	13	50	9	3.86	5	46	11	3.70	12	253	8	3.77	11
CLERGY	67	13	4.48	2	19	13	4.21	2	17	14	4.24	4	103	1	4.31	3
PHYSICIAN	50	14	3.95	7	12	14	3.75	9	21	13	4.29	2	83	14	4.00	6
EMPLOYER	87	12	3.81	11	22	12	3.59	12	47	10	3.57	13	156	12	3.66	13
PAID TEACHER	103	10	4.63	1	56	8	4.09	3	54	8	4.28	3	213	9	4.33	1
PUBLIC LIBRARIAN	30	15	4.22	5	7	15	4.29	1	7	15	4.43	1	44	15	4.31	2
BUSINESS PERSON	136	8	3.95	7	68	7	3.78	8	63	7	3.98	8	267	7	3.90	8
OTHER	166	5	4.35	4	115	4	4.01	4	110	2	4.06	6	391	4	4.14	4
TOTAL	2222		4.00		1052		3.77		936		3.95		4210		3.91	
LEARNING ACTIVITIES				625				320				304				1249

Using data from tables 1 through 3 in conjunction with theories and findings of social psychologists one can begin to appreciate the amounts of energy, psychological costs, risk taking, and time taken involved as 191 actors coped with learning something new. Frequently included was the ambiguity of establishing new dyads and relationships, sometimes at the expense of existing associations. At times, they found themselves experiencing unintended consequences; questioning previously accepted axioms; or struggling with reversals in health, employment, relationships. At other times they accepted the challenge of carrying out dormant desires and dreams, expanding the boundaries of their life-space, and established new dyads that resulted in meaningful relationships. Then the benefits and rewards outweighed most costs.

Episodes provide insight into various aspects of boundary modification, dyad formation, and sense-making including the dilemma of marginality, time perspective, sociolocomotion. It would be unfair to force actors into specific categories, nevertheless this researcher has taken the liberty to accent their reported/observed dominating circumstances, learning activities, and lifestyles.

How adults perceived their life-space to have been impacted, and altered, by seeking and managing information, solving crises, exploring creativity, building and improving relationships, and developing or achieving personal values demanded responses and adjustments. In some instances the processes were so unresolved that actors were reduced to despair and despondency. Others exuded

exhilaration and a sense of accomplishment. These efforts could result in the expansion, or contraction, of their life-space, stemming from deliberately and carefully planned endeavors, happy accidents, or serendipity.

Assuming or acting out roles, when confronted with unfamiliar or unanticipated life experiences, was determined by the station that respondents accepted in relation to other participants in the episodes, or as they solely interacted with the events themselves. In a given situations, they accepted such roles as parents, siblings, sons, daughters, employees, employers, peers, teachers, students, or any other characters they may have considered appropriate in a given situation (Sarbin in Allen and Scheibe, 1982). As they recalled episodes, respondents were reminded of the sociopsychological impacts on their life-space. Memories elicited feelings of being accepted, appreciated, bedeviled, blessed, confused, contented, defamed, fulfilled, maligned, neglected, oppressed, protected, rejected, satisfied, scared, victimized, welcomed, etc., feelings which they sometimes consciously or unconsciously acted out during the interviews. A retired military officer reminisced about the "mighty urge" that swept through him when an opportunity to produce a play was offered. Previously active in the theater, this new challenge conjured in his mind the anticipation and anxiety involved in such an undertaking. It was a challenge he could not resist, for, as he looked back, the new production created significant opportunities and problems to hone his theatrical skills.

Sometimes, a set or sets of characteristics often considered inappropriate, were openly displayed. The most self-assured persons could recall being overwhelmed by uncomfortable feelings when placed in conditions that could be conducive to such conduct.

It must be assumed I will never fully understand all that transpired in the life-space of each given actor in each reported project. It must also be assumed that in the process of recalling any given episode, the adults themselves were filtering memories through events occurring in their life-space at the time of the interviews. Nevertheless, it is worth the risk to assume that interpreting the reported dialogues through theories of social psychologists will be useful to the readers.

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Boundary modification appeared to be a natural consequence in developing or disintegrating relationships. Lewin's extensive research resulted in concepts that continue to be appropriate. Transforming friendships into mate selection, struggling with atrophying relationships (such as marital separation and divorce), and wrestling with conflicting generational values were shared, at times with a sense of remorse, or trepidation. In all cases they were descriptions of life-space modification.

An incident corroborating Argyle's (1968) equilibrium principle involved a prolonged family conflict in an otherwise close-knit family. When asked what she/they (in the presence of her husband) had learned in the previous year, the middle-aged

woman alluded to a clash in family values involving their oldest daughter. They had been struggling to cope with the fact that she married an immigrant who was not their first choice for a son-in-law. For more than a year, personal contact with the newlyweds was avoided. Now, after the daughter requested that she, and her husband, be allowed to attend Thanksgiving dinner, the father grudgingly acquiesced. While standing around for the meal to begin, the son-in-law confronted the mother's rejection stating: "You treat your dog better than you treat me. You even bring my wife's old boy friend to this dinner. But I married your daughter, and you are going to have to accept that." The mother told the interviewer that "And he had the brass balls to stand there and talk to us like that. We finally realized we were the ones who were going to have to change, and, from that time, four months ago, we have been learning how to reconstruct our family."

Other than confiding in their pastor about their dilemma, the couple struggled to find a solution between themselves (the propinquity principle, Theabaut and Kelley, 1991). The family's options included denial, shunning the couple, pressing for an annulment, separation, divorce, accepting the marriage but avoiding of the couple, reluctantly accepting the son-in-law into the family, participating in joint counseling with the couple to resolve the discord, setting aside differences by accepting the marriage with hopeful reservations, or conditionally accepting the couple into the family.

Following the Thanksgiving dinner, avoidance behavior began to

diminish. Both mother and father, took, in their own eyes, the risk to become vulnerable by attempting to build a relationship with the son-in-law. Comparing the son-in-law to the daughter's old boy friend was being resolved (Thibaut and Kelley's Comparison Level and Comparison Level Alternative, 1991). At the time of the interview, however, the costs of learning to "reconstruct the family" were still greater than the rewards.

A potential consequence of effectively developing a more favorable relationship with the son-in-law would be the expansion of their life-space into a culture distinct from their own, including economical, geographical, political, religious, and social areas. Whether or not this took place could not be determined. The potential for learning something new, however, was beyond just "reconstructing their family".

The owner of a small carpet-laying company acted out his feelings as he discussed several of the issues that impacted his life-space including attempting to become a better employer by improving employee relations/retention in a normally high turnover business; being a husband going through an unwanted divorce; assuming the family leadership role among his siblings including one in prison; and arbitrating a family dispute (see "Everything's Kind of Gotten Screwballed Into a Big Mess" in Shirk, 1984).

Despite his insecurity regarding business matters and employee relationships, being ravaged by disintegrating domestic strife at home and with his extended family, and the feeling of being handicapped by having only a tenth grade education, this actor, was

a risk taker.

His numerous roles at work included at work, employer, businessperson, counselor, teacher, father figure, authoritarian; at home, he was a step-father, estranged husband, and lonely male; with his extended family, he was brother, son, counselor, and mediator. Taken together, they may have brought enough ambiguity into life to neutralize his effectiveness. He was trying. He was concerned. He also sensed that he was ill-equipped to effectively prioritize and place events into perspective, for many things were closing in on him at once. He was concerned and unhappy, but, he was trying.

While conducting an interview in a cafe, a recent German immigrant and 28-year-old new mother, with infant in arm, was trying to think about what she had learned in the previous twelve months. Her first reaction was "I didn't learn anything last year," but, then, bolting upright in her seat, she said out loud to herself "Stop. I had a new child, and I've been learning a new language, Spanish, have been teaching German, and am learning more about English". It was childbirth that sparked her mind to trace back over the experiences and changes in her life during the previous year. It was having her first child that had a major impact on her life; at one point she added "The relationship I develop with this child will create my next 80 years!"

Estimating that approximately 600 hours had been invested into her pregnancy, the birth, and the nurturing of the new baby, she could point to new dyad formations, some of which were more intense

than others. Relationships with friends, a physician, an informal group, a paid teacher, and bonding with the new child stretched and compressed the boundaries of her life-space. Major roles she had been assuming were spouse, teacher, student, and patient. Now, she was a mother--a role that she would grow into, and that would indelibly leave its mark.

The pregnancy did not deter her from attempting to plaster her house, nor did it prevent her from planting her first flower garden. She was also developing an interest in religion. Public library resources were used to support her interest in the Spanish language, and she planned to use its information on child development in the next year.

Boundary Modification, Marginality, and Poverty

Poverty was encountered among young and old respondents. All harbored the desire to achieve a level of survival above that of their current experience. If unemployed and seemingly unemployable, they hoped they could at least get work in some kind of service industry whether as a waitress, janitor, maintenance person, or some other presumably "secure" position. Though not satisfied with their current lot in life, they appeared to sense they would have experienced greater uncomfortableness if placed in an unfamiliar or foreign social environments. They fostered an "us and them" mentality--in Lewinian terminology, they were marginal actors.

Their frustrations were linked to age, lack of marketable

skills, physical and mental limitations, and hostile social norms. Harrington (1971), Moynihan (1969), and others have addressed the cultural issues of poverty and its invisible underclass that are reflected in the following vignettes.

Severely hampered by a limited income that compelled her to capitulate to a self-defeating homeless lifestyle, that included living "in an old school bus", this woman was now trying to maintain employment as a waitress. "Basic living" is the way she put it. Learning how to stand up for herself and developing a different attitude toward her mother were major achievements in the past year.

How does a person get a handle on life when he or she feels imprisoned, or compelled to live out a destitute lifestyle? One step taken by this woman was an attempt to stand back, become detached, and learn to analyze her present predicament. But she needed help.

She took a psychological risk by seeking out and establishing a client relationship with a counselor to sort out the ambiguity that existed between herself and her mother. She said:

> I have not necessarily been on the offensive but also not on the defensive. I've learned to watch my attitude toward myself, have been learning to like myself, learning to become a different person. I'm becoming different I'm not the scapegoat, and I'm doing it without having to be mean to others. It's been a day-by-day kind of thing trying to keep a handle on my life. And I have learned to see other people in trouble, know the signs, including my mother. One thing I have learned out of this is not to encourage people, not to go overboard with them. It has been exhaustive, but I did the best I could at that time.

She acted out several roles while trying to cultivate a lifestyle that would allow her to develop effective patterns for coping with conflict and repressed needs or desires. Depending on the age and gender of the counselor, her role as patient hinged on how she imaged herself in that relationship--whether as child, teenager, sibling, confessee, or any other roles associated with her past. New dyads were being established: it was worth her time, money, and effort, for a sense of self-worth was emerging. The mother was not mentioned as an asset in her struggle, and the father was an absent figure. The counselor proved more effective than other sources to which she turned for help including her own books, a friend, and the media.

Living in a small house, in a low-income part of town, surrounded by scattered small pieces of equipment, scrap lumber, and two old vehicles, the under-educated, fifty-two-year-old, married "handyman" had been unemployed nearly two years. Laid off at the local saw mill, he was now surviving on welfare and attempting to supplement family income by cutting grass, doing other odd jobs around town, and hoping to create something with the scraps of wood. At the time of the interview, he in the process of tuning up a vehicle. He was, to no avail, attempting to find a permanent job using the local employment office and congressman. When asked if he had learned anything new in the past twelve months he could not think of any--trying to make ends meet took too much of his time.

Although he did not seem to have completely lost a sense of aspiration for the future (Harrington, 1971), he did not appear confident about its prospects. As the interview progressed, bits of insights into his plight emerged. He demonstrated a tinge of regret for his limited fifth-grade education which he attributed to his poor eyesight, and his parents' response to it, that resulted in the termination of his schooling. When asked if he would like to pursue any learning projects in the next year, he could only think of one, finding permanent employment.

While he was not satisfied with the role of being a welfare recipient with its attending stigma, it offered, this person knew his age and education did not bode his future well. Since he did not belong to any organizations, his network of support groups outside of family and friends was almost non-existant. The town role he could play was that of the handyman, and it brought him about as much satisfaction as being a welfare recipient. All he wanted for now was to find a full-time job--being assured of a weekly pay check could at least provide him with that sense of dignity.

An interview, in which poverty's potential was evident, occurred in a moderately low income neighborhood. The thirty-one-year-old wife and mother had been selected to participate in the study that took place in a living room dominated by four large aquariums (a total of eight were in the home). The thirty-six-year-old husband and father was observed peeking (with a big

friendly smile) out of, then retreating back into, the kitchen. At the conclusion of the session, the wife asked me to consider including him in the study. The husband and I were at first reluctant. At the urging of the mother, several exploratory questions were made.

A truck driver with an eighth-grade education, the father acknowledged he could not read. He conducted his business by remembering landmarks rather than reading signs. Two major factors influenced the family in the past year. One was a $2,000 investment, and over 500 hours in raising tropical fish, some of which he hoped to sell to the public at the appropriate time. The other was the terminal illness and death of his wife's father, an ordeal that emotionally drained the family.

How did an actor who could not read cope with a major financial project? How did he follow directions? What did he do when faced with problems? His response was threefold: he followed his instincts and observations, depended on his wife to read feeding and medical instructions, and when all else failed, he would get help from tropical fish dealers in a nearby city. Although he had been reluctant to establish a firm relationship with nearby dealers, he found ways to disguise his inability to read. He played several roles in this venture, including buyer, trader, business partner, critical observer, an inquiring and listening husband, and a somewhat reluctant, though affable, information seeker. He had to trust the information people gave him. His winning smile and shy friendliness put people around him

at ease; it helped compensate for his handicap.

He was particularly sensitive about his inability to read in relation to his children. He and his wife made a determined effort that their young boys make regular visits to the local public library, and participate in the summer reading program.

When asked what learning projects he might have for the next year, he voiced a desire to participate in the local public library and high school literacy program. He knew he had to learn to read and write. A second goal was to build a log cabin. Resources of the public library would be instrumental in helping him achieve these goals. (Note: credit was due to his wife. She believed in him and was so proud of him as a husband, and his achievements in particular, that she wanted him to participate in the study.)

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION AND LONELINESS

Encounters with marginality and loneliness among men arrested my attention frequently enough to give it consideration. Lonely men, divorced and middle-aged, often lived in sterile, dreary, or sometimes deceptively imaginative, environments. Employed or retired, at times they described elaborate schemes that they had pursued, but these strategies appeared to be a veneer that could not conceal the inner emptiness that surfaced in the interviews.

I only observed these men in their homes. How they assumed their responsibilities outside the home was unknown to me. What I did notice was that if they appeared imaginative or resourceful, that seemed to be a pretense or wish for something more. They

seemed to have been estranged from others and themselves. Did they portray a spirit of well-being? Signals seemed mixed. Regret, second guessing, and discontent seeped into their conversations. Life appeared to have closed in on them, particularly when they were alone.

One man, having to tend to a minor interruption at the beginning of the interview, invited me to a stuffed chair in a small, dimly lit, dark green setting room. On the walls were several framed prints and paintings, some by his mother. The only source of light was a fire alarm box made into a shaded standing lamp with a built in coffee stand that stood adjacent to the chair. My eyes were immediately drawn to a pretentiously large ashtray that was nearly filled with cigarette butts. My line of vision was then led to a large kraft grocery sack on the floor, and adjacent to the lam. It was nearly one-fifth filled with more butts. Books, magazines, newspapers or other reading material were not in sight, nor was a television set noticeable in the room. A hunch entered my mind that this particular actor spent many smoke filled, some lonely, hours in this room. The ensuing interview did little to alter my suspicion.

Heavy set ("I could not even run across the street"), divorced ten years, a retired fireman, and his son living with him, his first response to the question about learning something new in the previous year was "I'm retired, and really haven't gone out of my way to learning something new this past year". Probing led him to

discuss his dominant interest, membership in a local gun club; he was now learning to load ammunition. His sources of information for this project included several gun magazine subscriptions ("I wouldn't subscribe to one unless I was sure it would be helpful"), books published by weapons manufacturers, membership in the National Rifle Association, and conversations with friends ("I pick their minds"). He did not indicate whether his son shared an interest in his gun hobby, however their being together did provide him with some companionship.

Did retirement contribute to the onset of loneliness? It could have. Had he imposed limits on the benefits of his high school education by not nurturing a sense of curiosity? His former profession required continuous retraining, that was in the past.

Welding classes through thelocal junior college extension program was an option for the future, as was obtaining a federal firearms license. Pursuing classes could have had the potential of introducing him to a second career.

A long-time divorced actor's life was mostly consumed by his occupation as a real estate appraiser for the state. His home was immaculately kept and modestly furnished, many reading materials present. Toward the close of the interview he disclosed his sense of loneliness with "I've always blamed the fact that I was not a good dancer--that I didn't get involved with others....I'm very home oriented." He added "I did play basketball for the first time in five years but really didn't get involved in anything new in the

past year." He spent his spare time taking care of an old marine hospital cemetery and reading. "Most of my reading is recreational and for my pleasure; it includes westerns, Time-Life books, World War II, ships, and western history." If he were to do something in the next year, he hoped to learn how to graft trees.

Caring for the cemetery was intriguing in that most of the grave sites were unmarked. On several occasions, the job provided opportunities to assist people who were conducting genealogical searches. One search in particular, tracking the burial site of a Civil War general, generated further interest in what he was doing.

Perhaps this person lacked the confidence to establish a meaningful relationships, so he filled his evening hours by himself. The role he seemed to feel most comfortable with was that of one who could fill the void with books, music, and pursuing a few added responsibilities such as tending the local hospital cemetery.

Divorced women, or women in the process of getting divorced also surfaced in the interviews. The following episode involves a recently divorced woman living in a small town.

Depressed, desperate, and devastated by the divorce, a twenty-seven-year-old mother of two had moved back home with her parents. She was bombarded with many situations at once, including having to seek employment and enter the workforce, participate in a counseling relationship, assume the role of grown child toward her parents, pursue college accounting classes, and adjust to being a

single parent.

Although confused and overwhelmed by all the changes that occurred, she listed projects that she had pursued in the past year: a typing class, Accounting I at a nearby university, IBM word processing, accounting on the job, learning to work with other employees, participating in a "women in transition" program, joining an emotions anonymous group, becoming the working mother, discovering how to be the single parent, personal counseling, and how to handle family finances. Fortunately, her parents were supportive throughout the ordeal. Not only did they provide her with an apartment to live in, she and her mother both enrolled in the college accounting class.

Sorting out many unfamiliar roles she was now forced to play was a major struggle. Conflicts between employees at work demanded that she rethink and re-image herself in relation to the employer, co-workers, customers and the like.

For resources to support this time of transition she relied on paid teachers, counselor, employer, employees, books from a public library, herself, family, and an informal group. Although curiosity instigated involvement in some of her learning activities, the driving force was the divorce--it necessitated drastic changes and boundary modifications that she otherwise might not have considered. While the divorce produced debilitating depression, it also triggered opportunities.

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION AND SOCIOLOCOMOTION

Whereas the earlier lonely male actor exhibited isolationist tendencies and regret, another phenomenon, sociolocomotion (Lewin in Cartwright, 1951) surfaced among several of the younger respondents. Whether by chance encounters with the right people at the right time or the result of carefully planned deliberations they pursued career and educational opportunities that propelled them into challenging, creative, and demanding ventures that influenced how they perceived themselves. As a result, they experienced and voiced gratitude for the opportunities that were afforded to them.

A thirty-two-year-old, self-motivated, successful respondent had already found that hard work and determination paid good dividends. Her intent was to push beyond the level of corporate success she had already experienced. If she took a business trip, she carried motivation tapes from her company library along with her. If an opportunity arose in the corporation to learn something new she took advantage of or at least displayed an interest in the various aspects of company life, such as management, finance, and other related fields. Though pleased with her achievements, they only sparked higher expectations of herself--including developing a strategy to break into a commercial venture of her own.

> I know one thing, I'm going to explore some opportunities for developing my own business. That's probably one reason why too, in this interview, you will find that a lot of my interests are weighted toward developing business skills.

> Because that's one of my goals...this is a good learning environment. You take advantage of working in a larger corporation and see some of the decisions that are made and the results of the decisions, and yet you don't have the risk of having your money tied up in that. So, its a good day-to-day learning experience.

Even though she did not consider it the appropriate time to make that major business shift, she was preparing herself for it. She approached her own social development in a similar manner. She found self-discovery through involvement in social groups by "learning to know people behind the outside wrappings." She noted, "I enjoy this aspect of getting to know people."

This woman was not a marginal person. She did not find herself uncomfortable in her current occupational environment, nor was she fearful at the possibility of expanding her career goals. Success had opened her eyes to windows of opportunity that she was hoping to pursue.

A recent high school graduate accepted a position in retail sales that introduced her to apparel merchandising. Having never met the public in this capacity, she fondly noted how the owner of a western store provided opportunities for her to meet sellers, go on buying trips, and select merchandise. Influenced by these exposures to an unexpected career, she was now planning to pursue merchandising as an educational and vocational direction for her

life.

The maturation process that occurred in that short period of time seasoned her world view. No longer was she the sheltered family member, who struggled at times with her self-identify and the seeming restrictions of home life. An important side benefit of her work was an improved relationship with her parents. Where her family roles had been limited to teenager, student, and dependent- child-answerable-to-parent ties in which she was unsure of both herself and the future, she was now able to converse on an adult-to-adult level. As an aspiring business person, she was investing in stocks, had become more adept at relating to the public (she was observed at a later time volunteering as a receptionist at a local community art gallery), and sensed that a promising future awaited for her.

Consider an example of sociolocomotion in the life of a small town respondent who felt he had not been afforded the opportunity to be socially accepted by his adolescent peers. Not from a "railroad family", he believed that factor deprived him of high school summer employment, for railroad work in that town was a family affair. After quitting high school, he migrated to an urban setting where he eventually pursued a successful career in the restaurant business.

Later, upon returning to his home town, he opened a business at a prime location hoping that he would be recognized for what and who he had become. By conducting the interview at the restaurant,

an opportunity was provided for him to, not only talk about, but, openly act out his accomplishments in front of his employees and the public. He clearly stated that this venture brought him a sense of prestige and opened doors to community service groups, membership in the local country club (where he was now taking golf lessons), and new community relationships.

This actor obviously felt vindicated after having been left out community life in his teenage years. He knew from the experience of others that the restaurant business was risky, but it was a risk he was willing to assume. For now, he felt he was succeeding--as evidenced by his expanding business that was in the midst of major renovations. He could now play roles in community organizations, and he perceived his story as being one of migration from "social outcast" to, hopefully "socially accepted."

Success was also affording him the opportunity to explore his roots in the Mexican-American community. A personal goal was to learn more about his heritage from a grandmother who lived in the southwest.

A gregarious person, the primary sources of information for this actor were family, friends, and business associates or acquaintances. His golf lessons were provided by friends and the course instructor. Otherwise, all of his learning activities occurred with another person or alone.

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION AND TIME PERSPECTION

Senior citizens often reported feeling that life was passing

them by or closing in on them. Lewin referred to this phenomenon as "time perspective." The following vignettes may provide insights into the expansion or contraction of the life space of senior citizens.

A couple addressed an incident in their lives that clearly reminded them that the flower of youth surely fades. The husband, a retired railroad conductor on first-rate passenger trains, was now holding an office in the local veterans organization--an aactivity that expended much of his energy. The sociopsychological benefits gained by belonging to the group far outweighed whatever costs were incurred. Otherwise his life was a shell of what it had been as a respected railroad conductor.

There was a memory he hesitantly released. Taking me to his office, he directed my attention to a strategically hung photograph of his beauty-contest-winning wife (who, incidentally, was not permitted to access this space, even though in it was the family organ that she yearned to learn to play). Memories reminded him of better days. It was intriguing that husband and wife alluded to the "beauty pageant" incident; they both seemed to subtly suffer at being reminded of what had been.

The husband and wife were finding ways to adjust the aging process. He could act out his role as World War II veteran (a role far easier to play than his wife's as a former beauty pageant contestant). Her interests were primarily related to her local church and studying about Native Americans.

A product of the Montana homestead, an eighth grade educated eighty-six-year-old woman, was aware that her life was coming to a close. Recently migrating from a metropolis to a small town, the change radically impacted her life-space--her previously eventful involvement at a cosmopolitan senior center found no replacement in this community. In addition, her restricted walking ability led her to report, "We all have to give up sometime." She seemed to be resigning herself to living out her days for her grandchildren. For now, establishing new relationships did not seem to be worth the effort, especially when compared to her previous experiences.

Not all senior citizens, however, reported their later years to be vacuous days of ambivalence in which the "walls seemed to be closing in" on them. A sixty-nine-year-old financially independent widow was finding a new sense of freedom and control over her life now that she was solely responsible for making decision about financial investments, art, computers, friendships, and even exploring new issues, such as, her church's response to homosexuality.her church's response to such issues as homosexuality.

The issue of homosexuality came up when a friend indicated her preference for a lesbian lifestyle. Though perplexed, rather than reject or ignore her friend, she decided to become more knowledgeable about the subject. She garnered information from public libraries and local seminars, and reported, "I'm glad I have

a better feeling about those people. Because, it used to kind of turn me off. It just turned me off completely....Maybe I was afraid I was one (laughter). I know better than that".

Another friend, a wealthy widow, had given up the will to live. Why, she wondered, would somebody who could have anything she wanted give up on life? What separated this woman from some of the others in the studies was that she recognized her need to be with people.

Her favorable circumstances included financial independence, an inquisitive mind, good health, and a gregarious attitude toward relationships. Combined, they permitted her to act out creative roles and take part in activities in which the benefits outweighed the costs. A particularly interesting aspect about time perspective for her was that she could terminate relationships in organizations and replace them with others, a clear depiction of Thibaut and Kelley's (1986) concept of "comparison level alternate". She was able to compare the benefits provided by membership in several organizations to those received by participation in new found formal and informal learning groups. Without hesitation she made the switch.

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION AND THE INQUIRING MIND

Houle's treatise The Inquiring Mind (1972) and Tough's Adults' Learning Projects (1971) influenced the adult education movement, and to some extent, the library world. Actors were seen as inquisitive and intrigued with exploring and acquiring information-

-possessing the willingness to push beyond the boundaries of the familiar into the unfamiliar.

Inquisitiveness and willingness to be challenged by the unfamiliar was an exercise for the scholarly and non-scholarly. Creative expressions in the workplace, the home, exploring new relationships. There were incidents in which those with limited educations exhibited inquisitive and investigative qualities that challenged them to expand the boundaries of their life space.

Formerly the project manager of a Hawaiian high rise, a thirty-four-year-old man migrated to a small community on Pacific northwest coast. Challenged by his new surroundings, he said, "It is one of those towns that force you to learn. There are no formal education programs, so, if you are to learn you have to do it yourself....Here you are forced to learn something new to survive." As a college honors graduate in the fine arts with some carpentry and remodeling experience, he took it upon himself to restore his newly purchased turn-of-the-century home. One project involved framing and "doing valleys and hips--now I can do a valley in half an hour". Cabinet making was an area that "petrified" him yet in the past year he completed a $6,000 project.

> When I built my first cabinet it looked so good I said "damn" and went on from there. I would say that its a matter of learning how to make cabinets, but feeling secure enough to do them. And so I started doing them, building confidence in what I was doing. I remember watching people doing things, so,

> now, here I bought my own dowling jig and people liked them. I had the information in my mind, so, now, I picked that which was dormant in my mind and used it. I also built a step foundation--I never did one before, just figured it out and went at it. I knew I had to put in rebars, and things like that, and it came out square.

His comments "I picked that which was dormant in my mind" and "I remember watching people doing things" are representative of the inquisitive. They are sufficiently confident to embrace and undertake the unfamiliar.

An Eastern European immigrant was currently pursuing a career as a coastal fisherman that would provide a source of income for pursuing his long range goal of acquiring an engineering degree. For now, fishing was a priority that included the possibility of building a new boat, and keeping the present vessel in operating condition. Relying on his engineering skills, he invented a bilge pump for which he hoped to attain a patent (the maze of patent laws proved not to be particularly supportive, however).

His interest in current events and world geography was consuming interests that were satisfied through visits to public libraries, museums, and perusing current magazines. In addition, as he lived in a border state, he realization that learning Spanish was a necessity. So, he had spent more than 300 hours studying the language during the previous year. When I probed regarding the projects he might tackle during next year, he included the topics

of art, sculpting, history (particularly Maximilian of Mexico and Napoleon), his continued desire to build a fishing boat, and oceanography. Public libraries and museums would continue to be prime information support sources.

His inquisitiveness expanded the boundaries of his life-space by opening opportunities for entering new relationships. His desire to further his formal education would continue to challenge his investigative thought processes. His intrigue with the unfamiliar, including foreign languages, was fostering the mentality of a cultured man with an expanding worldview.

The twenty-six-year-old cabinetmaker and carpentry foreman had been involved in his trade for seven years. He had a curiosity about antique tools and methods of repairing and restoring classical furniture--an interest that colleagues encouraged. In addition, an elderly supplier introduced him to the compound miter, and a dated English jointer book published more than 100 years earlier. Intrigued by the process presented in the book he took it upon himself to learn this technique, a process he described as follows.

> For years I've been putting my furniture together all at once...and it's a simple process. I don't know why I've been doing it like that, each cabinet maker determines his own way of doing things until a man, one time, just suggested that I try it, putting together two pieces at a time, which most people would....The reason that I did it the other way was so

that I was sure that everything was going to fit just perfectly. But, as I began to experiment with that idea I came up with methods of holding the two pieces together while protecting all the sharp edges at the same time. And then when I was finished I had an even, it was even better than it had been in the past. Of course, we're talking about fine furniture, not the kind sold in stores. And, in a way, I shied away from the miter over the years because of the fact that it was so hard to work with. And, now, its becoming a very simple joint for me again. And I would have to say in that process of learning how to assemble the two pieces at once instead of all sides, I have spent probably 300 hours.

Overcoming frustration provided a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that he could now specialize in, and incorporate in future jobs.

The local town dump was a seventy-five-year-old retired actor's "Bon Marche" (a major retailer in the Pacific Northwest). He would scavenge the area searching for items that might be useful at a later date, and stored his finds in a large and well supplied work area that included radio and recording equipment, machine and wood working tools, and telescopes. This was his "toy room". Looking for new ideas, he commented "even if I'm eating at the dinner table and a thought comes to my mind I'll stop what I'm doing and look it up".

He dropped out of college after his junior year, but said, "I

never stopped my education." An amateur photographer with his own dark room, amateur astronomer, amateur inventer, and bird watcher, his recent projects included designing a switch for a vacuum sweeper; developing a trap to catch 22 caliber bullets in his outdoor target range ("but I don't like to kill anything"); and studying the book of Revelation.

Inner directed, he did not turn to others, neither friends, librarians, libraries, or organizations, to assist him with his projects. As a self-directed learner, he said "the dog didn't climb the tree. But my dog had to climb the tree, because a bear was chasing him". Bird watching the only learning activity that included others.

If he were to pursue any interests in the coming year, he said he would consider studying about the opera and operas, and try to become familiar with the Russian language. In both instances, he would rely on his own ability to absorb information from tapes.

While not necessarily a loner (though in my observation notes I wrote"Lonely man?"), neither was he quick to invite others into that creative part of his life-space. He liked being stymied, and having his ability to solve problems challended. Interestingly, in the area of religion, he was more comfortable with absolutes--in this case, a fundamentalist mentality provided satisfying answers.

The fifty-year-old had been a tinkerer with gadgets and electronics from the time he was in grade school. Now doing the same with computers. Although he quit high school (during the

interview the wife interrupted "You quit high school, but you also got your GED. So, you can say you have a high school education.") to join the navy, his education and interest in electronics was not abandoned. When he was appointed to attend electronics school, the opportunity for a formal education, his personal aptitude, and a spirited interest converged. A lifelong career resulted.

Tragedy opened new doors of opportunity for an actor who, ten years earlier, experienced a severe back injury that ended his electronics career in railroading. Developing an interest in computers was initiated with little effort--it followed a natural progression from tinkerer to electronics to computer programming. Now everything seemed to fit into place: even his unfortunate accident provided the time and income to pursue his new venture. He said "I was the first person on the block to get a personal computer, now I'm doing my own programming."

His programming was facilitated by enrolling in a correspondence course in custom programming that he "waded through" at the cost of nearly 500 hours of time. Unlike those who perceived new technology to be a threat, he met it head-on by accepting computers as a challenge and contest to confront, a contest for the mind as well as the will. When thoroughly overwhelmed by the subject matter he conferred with professionals who could help him interpret unfamiliar computer language. Managing to become sufficiently proficient with a software system, he was creating a quasi-cottage industry in the form of a

computerized accounting system that he and his wife were marketing to area loggers.

Other activities pursued by this actor included guitar lessons and a stock market correspondence course. He was hoping, in the next year, to continue guitar lessons, possibily pursue an interest in woodworking, and study history.

Self-directed, he would, as a last resort, consult computer professionals who could assist with his projects. Librarians were not in that group. He was not a loner, rather, it seemed that the role he was acting out pitted himself against himself. Not willing to let go, he indicated that a great sense of satisfaction was generated when he could push through to new levels of competence. It was also obvious that his wife supported his new ventures.

CONCLUSION

These selected vignettes are representative of respondents in the three studies. Professions and occupations ranged from the unemployed to rock musician, accountant, clergy person, political pollster, logger, school administrator, district court judge, surgeon, lawyer, political pollster, waitress, banker, homemaker, postal clerk, logger, museum docent, cook, waitress, fisherman, and carpenter. Formal educational experiences ranged from no formal training to earned doctorates. Economic and class status ranged from upper-middle to lower income groups, from the fully employed or retired to the unemployed. Ages ranged from 18 to 91. Although many respondents were well-read, the illiterate and mentally

handicapped participated as well. It has been impossible to do full justice to stories shared from their life-space.

I have been reminded that adults are constantly confronted by change, influenced in part by a technological revolution that will affect nearly every aspect of social life. In the midst of that change, a hunger and thirst for stability will sometimes occur. It may pit the haves against the have nots, or stir up enchantment in the heart of another Edward Bellamy, whose Looking Backward, 2000-1887 anticipated a fictitious new world order. It may lure adults to the simplicity of a "Walden" or communal lifestyle. Others will welcome the challenge that ambiguity and change affords. For others, like Teilhard de Chardin (1964) discontinuity will be greeted in the belief that even though life's evolutionary processes are be capable of being thwarted, they cannot be derailed, for they will always be open to ultimate progressive possibility.

I was pleased to become acquainted with Argyle's extensive studies accumulated in The Social Psychology of Everyday Life (1992), brought repeated nods of the head as it was perused. Another important title is Fiske and Chiriboga's longitudinal study Change and Continuity in Adult Life (1990). It is highly recommended to any person interested in the subject of lifelong learning.

Finally, the third part of this series will discuss the sociopsychological and economic costs and benefits (consumer behavior) of lifelong learning.

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